

Understanding the State Board of Education and Its Role in Public Education

What is the State Board of Education?

The State Board of Education (SBOE) is composed of 15 elected members with each member representing more than a million Texans. Together, the members of the SBOE, the commissioner of education, and the Texas Education Agency facilitate the operation of the Texas public school system consisting of more than 1,200 school districts and charter schools, 8,200 campuses, 630,000 educators and other employees, and 4.7 million schoolchildren.

What does the State Board of Education Decide?

The SBOE adopts rules and establishes policies that govern a wide range of educational programs and services provided by Texas public schools.

The SBOE's duties include:

- Overseeing the investment of the Permanent School Fund which help funds public schools;
- Mandating what Texas students are taught and what classroom teachers must teach through the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills;
- Selecting textbooks and instructional materials from which Texas school districts chose;
- Approving the creation or revocation of open-enrollment charter schools;
- Adopting rules governing teacher and administrator certification and ethics as proposed by the State Board for Educator Certification; and
- Setting goals for the Texas public school system and adopting four-year plans for meeting those goals.

How Does the State Board of Education Work?

Although policy decisions must be made by the full Board, members also serve on one of three committees: Instruction; School Finance/Permanent School Fund; and School Initiatives. It is through the committees that members are able to review staff progress reports, consider proposals for new programs, and hear testimony from the public for improving current efforts prior to the issues being discussed by the full Board. A list of the SBOE members and the committees on which they serve is provided at the end of this document.

Who leads the State Board of Education?

Governor Rick Perry appointed Gail Lowe (R - Lampasas) as chair of the SBOE in July 2009, which means she will preside over SBOE meetings. She must be confirmed by the 82nd Texas Legislature to remain chair in 2011.

The Board elected its vice-chair, Bob Craig of Lubbock serves as Vice-Chair, and secretary, is Mary Helen Berlanga of Corpus Christi. In the event that Ms. Lowe is unable to serve, Mr. Craig will preside as chair until the Governor appoints a new chair.

The Governor appointed Robert Scott as Commissioner of Education in October 2007, as such; he serves as chief executive officer of the Board.

When and Where Does the State Board of Education Meet?

The SBOE is required to meet at least quarterly and its meetings generally last two to three business days. Meetings are usually held in Austin at the William B. Travis State Office Building, which houses the Texas Education Agency. Each meeting is open to the public. As of September 2009, the public may view live web casts of the SBOE's meetings on the Agency's web site <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>.

How Long Do State Board of Education Members Serve?

SBOE members are typically elected to serve four year terms. The *exception* is after a U.S. Census when districts are redrawn. Members must draw straws with some drawing a two-year term and others a four-year term. Their terms are staggered so that one election cycle eight members are elected and the next election cycle the remaining seven are elected.

Are State Board of Education Members Compensated?

SBOE members do not receive a salary but are reimbursed for all expenses incurred, not to exceed the budget established for attending regular and special meetings of the Board and Board committees.

Are State Board of Education Members Affiliated with Political Parties?

Unlike trustees, State Board of Education members are political party nominees and appear on the ballot with a party affiliation such as: Republican, Democrat, Independent, Libertarian, and Green Party.